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ABSTRACT

This guide presents a step-by-step procedure for education graduates seeking their first teaching position. The job search process is broken down into five phases: arranging for transcripts and letters of recommendation, identifying job location possibilities, correspondence with schools that are likely to have positions available, the interview, and follow-up. Also included are tips on conduct at interviews and resume writing. (RJG)

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A JOB SEARCH MODEL FOR THE EIGHTIES

Designed and Developed

by

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Department of Curriculum and Instruction
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Bloomington, Indiana
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
INTRODUCTION	1
PHASE I BACKGROUND	2
PHASE II IDENTIFYING JOB LOCATION POSSIBILITIES	3
PHASE III WRITTEN COMMUNICATION	5
PHASE IV THE INTERVIEW	8
PHASE V AFTERWARDS: THE FOLLOW-UP	9
A FINAL WORD	9
APPENDICES	
APPENDIX A: PLACEMENT BUREAU SERVICES	11
APPENDIX B: TIPS ON INTERVIEW	12
APPENDIX C: HELPFUL HINTS ON RESUME WRITING	13

INTRODUCTION

To find a full-time teaching position in this day and age is certainly no easy task. This is considerably more difficult to achieve than in past years. With intelligent planning, candidates can and will be successful in this endeavor. Keep in mind that persistence is an important factor in finding a job. Also note that decisions are being made late in the summer. Most employment and offering of contracts is likely to take place in August or very late July. April-May are very slow months--little forward action takes place. This knowledge should definitely affect your planning.

This model is constantly being revised as new data and information come to light. Every year the author conducts investigations related to this process.*

This Job Search Model is based upon the assumption that the jobs are there--let's go get them. Since some eighty to ninety per cent of Block Program graduates (Indiana University) find teaching positions every year, there must be considerable validity to both the assumption and the model. Knowing about the job search process itself and how to plan gives one a real advantage in obtaining a position.

Candidates should recognize that, in any field, there is always a shortage of top flight people. In addition, supply and demand vary greatly: (a) at a given point in time; (b) for different teaching fields; and (c) in different geographical areas of the country. In the 70's, teaching positions were most difficult to find but the situation had eased markedly by the end of the decade. By the mid 80's, a shortage, particularly of elementary teachers, is predicted. At the time of this writing, several shortages were already noted--distributive education, foreign language, English, mathematics, science, special education, and speech and hearing. In addition, there were many opportunities in the fields of Indian Education, bi-lingual education (teaching Mexican-American children), urban education, as well as overseas. Opportunities in Alternative Schools were also numerous.

Nationally, needs existed in parts of North Carolina, South Carolina, Wyoming, The Deep South, and many of our Southwestern states.

While this model does not relate to locating non-education positions, it should be noted that one could easily apply his/her educational skills and qualities to job settings outside of the education field.

*Some recent examples --

Significant Factors in the Employment Process: Views From Administrators and Teachers, Edward G. Buffie, Principal Investigator, 95 pp., Fall, 1978.

1979 Graduates of The Block Program: A Follow-Up Study, Edward G. Buffie, Principal Investigator, 35 pp., Spring, 1980.

PHASE I BACKGROUND

Transcripts

Many school districts will require an official transcript. Know where to obtain these and the conditions for same. For Indiana University graduates, the following conditions apply:

- A. Transcripts will be released only at the request of the candidate.
- B. First copy is free and is sent to you in the mail with your diploma. Additional copies are \$2.75 each.
- C. Send your check and appropriate directions to:

Office of the Registrar
Indiana University
Bloomington, IN 47405

Credentials

Although a few districts would consider one's candidacy without reviewing credentials, most will not. Fill these out carefully and completely, particularly your Candidate's Page. Credentials, including references, should be completed before making initial contact with a school district. Incidentally, candidates must pick up your own reference forms (The Right to Privacy Act requires this procedure). Reference forms will not be sent to writers even though they may be requested. One must have a minimum of two references before credentials will be released. Credentials will be sent either at the candidate's request or at the request of a prospective employer.*

The Placement Bureau

Establish a relationship with a Placement Bureau. Stop by in person or else write. Every Placement Bureau has key people--those who receive mail or telephone calls regarding openings. Make a point to meet these people. Placement Bureaus usually have written statements regarding their service. See Appendix A for Indiana University statement. Always keep the key people at the Placement Bureau up-to-date regarding your job search status.

The Right to Privacy Act

When a candidate asks a person to write a statement in his/her behalf, should the candidate sign a waiver? If one does so, he/she will not have the right to actually see what is written. How do prospective employers react to statements when candidates have not waived such rights? Research on this point has resulted in mixed responses. Credibility is clearly at stake. If the candidate does not sign the waiver, many readers simply do

*Credential files are often de-activated on September 30. This is important to note.

not value the reference in any way. Without confidentiality, these people simply do not believe that an honest appraisal will be forthcoming. Others don't seem to care whether the waiver is signed or not. Since candidates select the writer in the first place, this group assumes that all references will be good anyway. For these people, reference statements do not carry much weight in decision-making.

Placement Bureaus on the other hand, report that most administrators prefer that the waiver be signed. Personal experience supports this view. It is suggested that candidates sign the waiver except in cases where they really do not have any idea what people are going to write. Recommendations are usually important in the selection process, particularly those written by classroom and collegiate supervisors (those who are very familiar with your teaching). Statements written by college faculty members are next in terms of importance. To conclude that recommendations and references are not important would be risky.

PHASE II IDENTIFYING JOB LOCATION POSSIBILITIES

Geographical Parameters

Candidates need now to establish geographical parameters with respect to potential teaching positions. This is a critical point in the entire process. Be honest!

Would you be willing to teach anywhere in the world (the deserts of Africa or jungles of South America)? Are you interested in the U.S. or Canada? Are you interested in a particular region of the country?

Candidates need also to consider questions such as: Am I interested in teaching in a large city? A suburb? Small-medium sized town or city? Rural area?

For some people, the geographical parameters are very tight. For example, a person may want to, or have to, live in the Bloomington area.

Pinpointing School Districts

To whatever extent possible, try and pinpoint specific communities for job location purposes. For those hoping to teach in the Bloomington area, take a map and draw a circle around Bloomington. The radius of the circle might represent 40 to 50 miles, a distance that a candidate might be willing to drive should a job be offered. If possible, drive around different areas, talk with people, or read about the communities in question. On the basis of such information, candidates can rule out certain areas for one reason or another or else establish some sort of priority.

Once the communities are identified, it is then possible to obtain a list of the school districts, as well as the names of all superintendents and principals, serving these areas. When this has been achieved, written communication becomes the next step.

Some candidates will not have tight geographical parameters associated with the job search as illustrated in the above paragraph. They operate in a different way. Teaching positions are frequently advertised. Obtain such listings and then plan where to apply. Again, identify selected communities and then proceed as above with your own direct contacts as described in Phase IV. This is strongly recommended. Many jobs are not listed or advertised. The time period for hiring is frequently too short or else districts do not want hundreds of applicants.

Friends Can Help

Research by this author has clearly shown that Persistence and Help of a Friend are two critical factors in locating a teaching position. Once geographical parameters have been established, candidates should not hesitate to seek help from friends in order to: (1) find out if job openings have occurred; or (2) get names of people to contact. Do make your availability known even if there are no positions open at the moment. Who to contact is frequently a problem and does vary depending upon the size and organization of a district. Friends can really help at this juncture.

Former students are friends. You have a common bond and students do help each other. Many Placement Bureaus, and/or departments, keep up-to-date lists of all previous graduates and the present employment situations.

Check Job Listings,

If a candidate has tight geographical parameters associated with his/her search, skip this phase and move directly into Phase IV. With a limited number of options; candidates will probably make inquiries to all districts.

Available Positions

If one is registered with a University Placement Bureau, he/she will receive job listings from that office on a regular time interval, usually a week to ten days. Often these bureaus will require stamped self-addressed envelopes. Sometimes teaching positions are advertised in newspapers and professional journals. For example, candidates interested in teaching in Iowa, positions are always advertised in the Sunday edition of the Des Moines Register (all openings in the state). ASCUS announces job openings in its monthly journal.

Other private agencies provide job information as well. Some are professional placement agencies but make certain that fees are checked--costs for their service vary! In other instances, one may buy publications that list job openings.

Collegiate faculty frequently hear of openings (usually at the last moment). Keep those contacts informed.

Publications/Other Sources

Placement Bureaus, libraries, state and county departments of education, administrative offices for school districts, etc.--most of these will have directories of some type or another which list the names and addresses of school districts, schools, superintendents, and principals.

The most complete directory is

Elliott, Norman F. (Editor and Publisher), Patterson's American Education, Vol. LXXI, 1978, Educational Directories, Inc., Mount Prospect, Illinois, 768 pages.

Another example of a more localized directory is:

1980 Directory of Suburban Schools
(Chicago Suburban Schools)
Educational Service Region
33 West Grand Avenue (4th Floor)
Chicago, Illinois 60610

Always write to a person. "To Whom It May Concern" letters are deadly!

PHASE III WRITTEN COMMUNICATION*

Letters

The task here, once one receives anything at all encouraging following an initial query, is to maintain a continual flow of information to prospective employers such that visibility is maintained. Don't "bug people" (that's why frequent letters are better than telephone calls) but do let them know of your interest in them and availability. Most letters should not require a response.

In any written or oral communication (interviews), it is important to know what prospective employers consider to be important. The ASCUS (Association of School, College, and University Staffing) Research Committee recently released the results of a major study which was designed to identify what administrators consider important in the selection of beginning teachers.

*Candidates should always be very prompt with responses to a given school district. On the other hand, weeks may pass by before a school district responds to the candidate's inquiry. School district personnel have a difficult time keeping up with correspondence in these matters.

Candidates should take the following factors drawn from the study into consideration in preparing communications (written or verbal): (1) maturity; (2) interest; (3) enthusiasm; (4) poise; (5) ability to work with others; and (6) successful previous experience (student teaching and other jobs).

It is suggested that candidates make up a model letter for each of those suggested below. Always type up originals, of course, in any correspondence with school officials.

Why might candidates write to school officials? There are several reasons:

A. An initial letter could be --

1. an inquiry--are positions available or likely to be available, I'm interested and would like to be considered a candidate, please send application form. (If possible, deliver application in person or else include a picture of yourself with application. Visual impressions help.) Include a self-addressed stamped envelope along with your request for an application form.
2. a follow-up of positions listed--found out that a district has openings (notification from Placement Bureau), want to be considered a candidate, please send appropriate information.

B. Other letters could --

1. be a follow-up--am returning application form and will look forward to hearing from school district as things develop/credentials being forwarded (if not otherwise requested by school district).
2. be résumé letters--another important tool in the job search process/serves as a general introduction to a candidate's assets, strengths, qualifications, interests/supplements and/or compliments credentials. Résumé may be machine duplicated.

At this early stage, research has shown that reputation is an important factor in attracting attention to your candidacy. In your résumé, you may wish to call attention to any information which underscores the importance of this point. For example:

- a. IUB School of Education is ranked in the Top Ten in the country.
- b. Twice within the past decade, IUB School of Education has received national acclaim for the development of new programs in Teacher Education (AACTE Awards).
- c. IUB School of Education--best prepared teachers are in Elementary Education and Special Education (Placement Bureau Studies).

- d. The Block Program (one option for IUB Elementary Majors)--over past decade, between 80-90% find full-time teaching positions.

3. be status letters--

- a. Just finished my student teaching and recommendations or references are now available from
 b. Just completed my undergraduate degree and now qualify for provisional certification. . . .
 c. Just moved--new addresses, telephone numbers, times candidate can be reached

Most
Important

Be sure to keep prospective employers informed as to how contact can be made. Encourage them to call Collect.
Make it as easy as possible for them to locate you quickly.
 Leave telephone numbers of friends and relatives as well.
 In August, things will move quickly. Prospective employers will likely call only once--help them to call at the right time or identify a place where messages can always be left.

- d. Be in (school area) and would be available for an interview if desired.

4. provide additional information--

- a. Including a résumé which may be helpful in considering qualifications.
 b. Enclosed are pictures taken during Student Teaching.

5. be requests for further information--

- a. about the community, about the school district (it is not necessary to request salary schedules--usually included with other info about the schools).

Plan a steady flow of written communication. Receiving something every two-three weeks suggests to prospective employers that you are very interested in them. Lay out a time line, perhaps something like the following:

<u>May</u>	<u>June 1</u>	<u>June 15</u>	<u>July 1</u>	<u>July 15</u>	<u>August 1</u>
Initial letters sent out/applications returned	Send a résumé*	Student Teaching completed/references available	Pictures of work with children (Student Teaching). Time and telephone when I can be reached	Request info about community and schools	Be in your area/available for interviews

*See Appendix C for suggestions in preparing a résumé.

During the written communication stage, prospective employers are trying to determine your competency. There is also some interest in determining your interests, talents, zest for life. Extra curricular activities in high school and college do provide information along this line. Somehow or other, one tries to convey the image of competency, caring, and enthusiasm. Caring for the children and community one hopes to serve--a willingness to use oneself in service to others. Caring, when supplemented by enthusiasm and competence, makes a candidate very attractive.

Written Communication in General

What one says and how he/she says it is critical--many candidates are ruled out at this juncture. Poor language usage, spelling errors, and/or sloppy work can very quickly eliminate one from consideration.

Any written work should be handled with great care.

Avoid references to grade levels. Talk about teaching children, not first graders, for example.

Keep a record of all communications by district or school systems.

Many people keep index cards for each district where they have applied.

Note each contact you have made--date/time/persons/nature of communication.

PHASE IV THE INTERVIEW

When a candidate gets to this stage, he/she has eliminated 99% of the competition for a teaching position. Most school systems interested in candidates will want them to visit (at your expense). Preparation for the interview and knowledge about what to expect can ease anxiety. In a study reported by Leshner and Wade in 1975 entitled "A Nationwide Study of Teacher Employment Practices," the following characteristics were considered of high or above average importance by the 354 school hiring officials responding to the survey: (1) genuine interest in the position; (2) self-confidence and poised appearance; (3) facility for verbal communication; and (4) neat and well-groomed appearance. Being well-informed about the school district beforehand is another factor which impresses interviewers.

Before Hand

- A. Research the situation. Get info about the community and the schools. Read local newspapers. Arrive early and tour the community.
- B. Prepare questions. Candidates always get this opportunity. The kinds of questions people ask provide tremendous insights into their value systems as well as potential behavior as teachers.

The Interview Itself

Be yourself/smile/maintain good eye contact/Look people right in the eye/ Respond to questions succinctly but do respond fully/Refer to materials but only briefly as appropriate (don't use as crutch). Be aware of distracting language or mannerisms--avoid "you know", "O.K.", "Oh, wow", fidgeting with glasses. Chewing gum can be deadly. See also Tips on Interview (Appendix B).

At this stage, one's personality obviously emerges, competency is confirmed, and philosophical views come to light. Be sure to review your own positions regarding such questions as: What do I consider to be an ideal learning environment? (emotional climate as well as physical facilities/In an ideal teaching-learning situation, how do children behave? Teachers?/How should classroom management be approached? (Discipline) Be honest in all responses. One of the purposes of the interview is to find out if a "good fit" exists between a candidate and the particular context of the school situation.

PHASE V AFTERWARDS: THE FOLLOW-UP

Follow up immediately with some sort of Thank You note. Note personal observations on an index card. May be very helpful later if choice of positions develops (does happen frequently).

When a position has been accepted, notify other school districts (where you have applied) of this fact. This thoughtful gesture may have a great pay-off in the years ahead,

If a candidate receives an offer before another district, which may be preferred, has made its decision, it is perfectly ethical to contact the latter district to inquire about the status of one's application. Inform them of your offer. There is little time for decision making. When a position is offered, a school district will want an answer quickly.

A FINAL WORD

There is no question that the Interview is the single most important factor in the entire selection process. Be yourself, afterall this is the thing which has enabled you to get this far in the process in the first place!

Other factors important in the selection process, which have been verified through research time and time again, are (in priority): (1) letters of reference; (2) student teaching experience; (3) one's G.P.A.; and

(4) extra-curricular activities. On the basis of what employing officials can learn about one's past achievements with respect to these factors, invitations for interviews are extended. People who are "alive", have a wide array of interests, and potential for professional growth are very much in demand.

The jobs are out there--go get them!

APPENDIX A

PLACEMENT BUREAU SERVICES

Statement of Services

Placement Bureau, School of Education, Indiana University.
Below are some of the services provided by this office.

- Individual Placement Assistance is available to those seeking advising, counseling, and/or just information about such general or specific aspects of their own academic job search as: planning a search campaign, preparation of the placement credential file, resume and letter writing, interviewing skills, and alternatives for teaching/administrative personnel. Appointments can be made with a staff member through the Office receptionist.

- Credential File Service is provided to all Educational Placement Office registrants. This permanent file includes information about personal, academic, and work experience, as well as letters of recommendation on special Educational Placement Office forms. Anyone who has earned a degree from Indiana University or will have completed 30 credit hours by the time employment is anticipated may register and establish a file. (Exception: Graduate students who are working in a certification program need have only 21 hours at I.U. to be eligible to register.)

- Job Vacancy Lists are published approximately every 7-10 days and are available to Bloomington students in the Educational Placement Office receptionist's office or to all other registrants not in Bloomington who supply self-addressed, stamped envelopes. Three separate lists of all job openings of which the Office is notified are thus available to registrants seeking: (1) Elementary and Secondary school teaching positions, (2) College and University teaching/administrative positions, and (3) Public School Administrative positions.

- On-Campus Interviews with employing officials are scheduled and conducted in the Bloomington Educational Placement Office between December 1 and May every year. Announcements of forthcoming interview dates are made through the job vacancy lists and through this Newsletter. Registrants wishing to secure an interview with any of these officials must sign up by notifying the Educational Placement receptionist.

- The Placement Office Resource Library includes various materials that will provide assistance and often essential information to the job-seeker: directories, manuals, and brochures of various school systems--along with sample resumes, national periodicals which list job vacancies, and other materials--are available for use within the Office. A brief videotape explaining how to plan and conduct a successful job search campaign will also be available soon for viewing at any campus Educational Placement Office by the student preparing to enter the K-12 academic job market.

APPENDIX B

Tips on Interview. By the time a candidate gets to this stage, his/her pedagogical competency will probably be fairly well established insofar as the interviewers are concerned. Some verification of one's competency will, of course, occur as a result of discussion, but this is not usually the primary focus of the interview. Insights into one's personality and philosophy appear to be most important. Young people who are confident and enthusiastic usually create very positive images. People who smile and have a good sense of humor usually make good colleagues, all other things being equal. One's philosophy with respect to learning, teaching, and discipline usually emerge in response to questions relating to goals, ideal learning environments, role of the teacher, and discipline techniques. Questions like the following are typical: Why did you decide to become a teacher? What is your philosophy of education? If you could choose one word to describe your relationship with students, what would it be?

Some specific considerations:

1. Psyche yourself toward being alert, interested, and calmly confident.
2. Don't smoke unless invited.
3. Greet interviewer by name. Follow his/her lead on handshaking. Give a firm and warm handshake.
4. Seat yourself upon invitation.
5. Maintain comfortable eye contact. Smile when appropriate.
6. Give your undivided attention and listen well.
7. Maintain an open, upright position. Avoid posture that produces constricted and inhibited movement.
8. Talk for yourself. Emerge as an individual.
9. Make sure that your points are made around the Big Two:
 - "I'm interested in this position because . . . "
 - "I can offer . . . "
10. Don't bluff. Be honest. Be fair to yourself.
11. Take your time. Pausing after a question indicates your intent to reply thoughtfully.
12. Stay away from put-downs. (Of yourself, school, former employers, teachers, etc.)
13. Have some specific questions. Get them answered.
14. Be alert to cues that the interview is over. Sum up your interest in two to three sentences. Say something like, "I hope you'll get in touch with me if you have anything you want me to do or if you have any further questions."
15. Don't dally around. Say "Thank you." And leave.

See also Sweaty Palms: The Neglected Act of Being Interviewed by H. Anthony Medley. He has many additional insights for the person who is particularly interested in this facet of The Job Search.

APPENDIX C

HELPFUL HINTS ON RÉSUMÉ WRITING

Bureau of Educational Placement
School of Education
Indiana University
Bloomington, Indiana

The following tips on preparing a résumé (also known as a vita or data sheet) should be regarded only as general guidelines to follow. There is no one right way to compose a résumé. Each person is different and individual efforts should reflect this difference. However, there are certain helpful hints which the Educational Placement Office would like to share with you.

Who Needs a Résumé?

For those candidates who are seeking positions at the college level, your résumé is an essential element in your job-hunting campaign. While not absolutely necessary for applicants at the secondary and elementary levels, résumés are still highly recommended as a means to make yourself known to a prospective employer. In any case, they should be sent out in combination with individually typed cover letters. Without being accompanied by personally signed letters, résumés are almost sure to be ignored.

What is a Résumé?

1. Often referred to as a calling card, a résumé introduces you to a possible employer. It tells an employer what skills you have to offer and helps him decide whether or not to ask you for an interview. In essence, your résumé advertises a product (you) and should be designed to catch the eye of a buyer (the employer).
2. A résumé is not a complete autobiography. It is an hors d'oeuvre to whet the appetite of a prospective employer. The main course can be served later in an actual interview situation. This means that it should be kept short and to the point. Usually one page will suffice for beginning applicants. Candidates with more experience might want to stretch this limit but if they do, they run the risk of having their résumé gather dust on an employer's desk.

How Should It Appear?

1. Like your own appearance in going for an interview, a résumé should look neat and well-groomed in order to create a good impression. Sloppy spelling mistakes, poor punctuation and errors in grammar should be eliminated.
2. There should be a logical order of progression to your résumé. An employer shouldn't have to hunt all over for information.

3. It is a good idea to keep your résumé simple and straightforward. Fancy designs and flowery phrases probably won't help your cause in most cases.

4. Pictures are optional additions to a résumé. They are not required but at times, especially when an employer has many résumés to review, they may make your presentation stand out. Again, deciding whether or not to include a picture is a matter of personal preference.

5. It is advisable to have résumés printed professionally if you can afford the expense. Not only will they look better than mimeographed copies but you can also choose what color paper and type of print suits your taste.

Before you begin to actually put together your résumé, it is a good idea to assess your strengths and shortcomings. Think about some of the activities in which you have excelled. Consider your weak points. What aspects of your past employment record and education pertain to your present job objectives? What makes you a unique candidate in the eyes of an employer? Try not to just list what, when and where without telling something about your accomplishments.

What Should a Résumé Include?

1. Personal Information: Your name, current mailing address and phone number (also permanent address and phone), marital status, date of birth, height, weight, and health.

2. Professional objectives: What position are you seeking? What are your short-term career goals? Try not to get bogged down in lengthy explanations. You can save them for your placement papers or the interview itself.

3. Education: Start with your most recent experience and work backwards. List the schools you have attended, the degree(s) you have earned, your major, and the year you graduated (or expect to graduate).

4. Work Experiences: In reverse chronological order, list the inclusive dates you worked (month, year), the position you held, and the organization that employed you. Don't restrict yourself to just stating a title. Instead, briefly elaborate upon some of your duties and responsibilities at work. Include part time, summer and interim jobs as well as full time employment.

5. Military Service: If applicable, tell something about the time you spent in the service. Where were you stationed? What was the nature of your job and training? What awards or commendations did you receive?

6. Interests: This category allows you to display another side of your personality. Relevant topics for discussion include hobbies, organizations you belong to, leisure time pursuits, languages and cultural skills, travel, volunteer work, etc.

7. Miscellaneous: You might mention awards and honors in the section on interests or make a special sub-heading for this subject. Professional affiliations, if you have any, are also worth a separate listing.

8. References: Last but not least, let the employer know the names of three or four people you have asked for recommendations. Include their titles, office addresses, and telephone numbers. If you want to save room, you can just say that your references are available upon request. In the latter case, be sure to include your file number and the address of the Educational Placement Office.

A final bit of advice. In sending out your résumé and cover letter, be sure to address your correspondence to a specific individual. This extra piece of detective work shows an employer that you care enough about the job to do some investigating on your own.

GOOD LUCK!